DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 463 339 UD 034 852

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TITLE	The Transnationalization of Families: Immigrant Separations & Reunifications.
SPONS AGENCY	National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA.; Spencer Foundation, Chicago, IL.; Grant (W.T.) Foundation, New York, NY.
PUB DATE	2001-06-00
NOTE	22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Family Therapy Academy (23rd, Miami, FL, June 27-30, 2001).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Children; *Family (Sociological Unit); Family Status; *Immigrants; *Parent Child Relationship; Refugees
IDENTIFIERS	*Family Reunification; *Transnationalism

ABSTRACT

This study examined how children experienced immigrant separations when families migrated in a stepwise fashion. The study offers evidence that separation between children and one or both parents during the migratory process is common to a majority of immigrant children. Data came from the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Study, which focused on parent and child interviews that examined respondents' backgrounds and included a follow-up child interview about the separation and reunification experience. Participants were recent immigrants from Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico. Participating youths ranged in age from 9-14 years at the beginning of the study. The vast majority of the children had been separated from one or both parents during the migration process. Chinese families tended to migrate as a unit, while Haitian and Central Americans experienced the most family disruption during migration. Separation from the mother only occurred much less frequently within the whole sample, though the total incidence of children separated from their mothers during the course of immigration was very high. Children who arrived as a family unit involving no separations from their immediate families were least likely to report depressive symptoms than were children who had experienced separation. Separation followed by reunification, after an initial period of disorientation, appeared to lead to an increased sense of closeness and intimacy in some families. (Contains 98 references.) (SM)

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Plenary Talk, American Family Therapy Academy
Miami, June 2001

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UD034852

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Text of Plenary Talk given to the American Family Therapy Academy in Miami on June 29, 2001

THE TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF FAMILIES: IMMIGRANT SEPARATIONS & REUNIFICATIONS

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Globalization is transforming the shape of the family (Glick-Schiller, 1992). With over one hundred and thirty million immigrants and refugees worldwide, the proportion of families involved in migrations is considerable. In the United States today, a fifth of our nation's children are growing up in immigrant homes. In the process of migration, families undergo profound transformations that are often complicated by extended periods of separation between loved ones—not only from extended family members, but also from the nuclear family.

Families who migrate often do so in a "stepwise" fashion (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992). Historically, the pattern was of the father going ahead, establishing himself while sending remittances home, and then sending for the wife and children as soon as it was financially possible. Today, the first world's demand for service workers draw mothers from a variety of developing countries often to care for "other people's children." In cases where mothers initiate migrations, they leave the children in the care of extended family such as grandparents or aunts along with the father if he is still part of the family. In many other cases, both parents go ahead leaving the children in the care of extended family. When it is time for the children to arrive, they may be brought to the new land all together or in other instances, the children are brought in one at a time. Often the reunification of the entire family can take many years, especially when complicated by financial hurdles as well as immigration laws (Arnold, 1991; Simpao, 1999). These migration separations usually result in two sets of disruptions in attachments—first from the parent, and then from the caretaker to whom the child has become attached during the parent/child separation.

Though many families seem to be involved in these transnational formulations, there is little sense of the prevalence of these forms of family separations, nor of the effects on family relations (Falicov, in press). What we know tends to be anecdotal and largely derived from clinical reports (Falicov, 1998; Glasgow & Gouse-Shees, 1995; Prince, 1968; Sciarra, 1999). While these reports are important in delineating the syndrome and its clinical ramifications, they do not shed light on the prevalence of family separations caused by migrations. These studies, because they are derived from clinical populations, only focus on families and youth that are not successful in managing the separations without clinical intervention. This presents the possible danger of overly pathologizing the outcome of separations. In this paper, we will provide an indication of the scope of the issue reporting on the prevalence and nature of these separations. Using quantitative and qualitative data we will report on how children experience immigrant separations. We will also reflect on the effect of separations and delineate factors that may complicate or conversely attenuate the separation.

Methods

Data presented here are derived from part of the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Study conducted at Harvard University.[1] This interdisciplinary and comparative study was designed to document educational attitudes, academic engagement, and schooling outcomes among recently arrived immigrant youth coming from a variety of sending countries. In this paper, we will be reporting on findings that emerged from parent and child interviews designed to elicit background information about the participants, as well as a follow-up child interview in which we asked a series of questions about the separation and reunification.

The 407 participants initially recruited to the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Study are recently arrived immigrants from Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico. The youth, whom we are following longitudinally, were between the ages of 9 and 14 at the beginning of the

study. The participants, stratified by gender and country of origin, were recruited from seven school districts in the Boston and San Francisco greater metropolitan areas.[2]

Results

Strikingly, fully 85% of the youth in our sample were separated from one or both parents during the process of migration[3]. There are significant differences between the ethnic groups participating in the LISA study. Families from the Chinese group tend to migrate as a unit most frequently while the circumstances of migration for the Haitian and Central American group impose a family disruption during migration in nearly all cases (96% for both groups).

Table 1. From Whom Was Child Separated? [4]

N = 385	Chinese N = 78 %	Dominican N = 75 %	Central American N = 77 %	Haitian N= 71 %	Mexican N = 84 %	Total Sample %
Family comes all together	37	11	4	4	15	15
Family Separated During Immigration	63	89	96	96	85	85
Mother only	15	3	0	10	2	6
Father only	40	25	16	27	42	30
Both parents	8	61	80	59	40	49

From whom were these children separated? Nearly half of our sample were separated from both parents. Note that this includes separation as a direct result of immigration, as well as separation for multiple factors, including immigration combined with divorce, or the death of a parent, and so forth. Again, there are significant group differences. Separation from both parents was most likely to occur amongst the Central American families (in 80% of the cases). This incidence is also high among Dominican and Haitian families. When the child is separated from only one parent, it is most likely to be from the father, occurring in 30% of our cases. This was the typical pattern for Chinese and Mexican children.

Table 2. From Whom Was Child Separated—Mother or Father

	Chinese %	Dominican %	Central American %	Haitian %	Mexican %	Total Sample %
Mother at some time during the migration	23	64	80	69	42	55
Father at some time during the migration	48	86	96	86	82	79

Immigrant children today, just as they were historically, are most likely to be separated from their fathers (in 79% of our sample). This occurred in 96% of the Central American families, and in over 80 percent of the Dominican, Haitian, and Mexican families. It was least likely to occur among the Chinese, but still occurred in nearly half the cases. Separation from only the mother occurs much less frequently within the whole sample. It is important to note, however, that the total incidence of children separated from their mother during the course of the immigration is very high. Fifty-five percent of the children are separated from their mothers sometime during the course of migration. There are dramatic differences here between groups. The Chinese children are least likely to be separated from their mothers, while the majority of Central American, Dominican, and Haitian, children lived apart from their mothers for a time. Nearly half the Mexican children are separated from their mothers sometime during the course of migration.

Additionally, it is important to note that 28% of the children have been separated from their siblings as a direct result of migration. The stepwise pattern of bringing in the children to the U.S. is more common among the Dominicans and Central Americans group occurring in approximately a third of the families. Finally, we must not forget that in most cases in which the child has been left in the country of origin, whether with one parent or alone, a significant bond of attachment is likely to have been formed with another primary caregiver, such as an aunt, uncle, grandparent, etc. The impact of the separation is quite apparent in the qualitative data I will present shortly.

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Families often expect that the process of establishing a home in the host country will not take long, and that the family will be reunited within a short period of time. This often does not occur, for a variety of reasons including financial obstacles, difficulties with legalizing immigration status, as well as for personal reasons, such as divorce and separation of parents, propelled by the tensions of the migration process. Thus, the length of separation from parents can turn out to be unexpectedly long, with individual cases in our sample reporting being separated from one or both parents for nearly their entire childhood.

Table 3. Length of Separation From Mother Due to Migration (for those separated)

N = 170	CHINESE %	DOMINICAN %	CENTRAL AMERICAN %	HAITIAN %	MEXICAN %	Total Sample %
Up to 2 years	41	36	20	13	77	34
2-4 years	53	39	31	53	23	38
5+ years	6	25	49	34	0	28

The difference among the groups in length of time for which the children have been separated from their mothers is striking. The majority of the Mexican youth separated from their mothers less than 2 years. Chinese children rarely separate from their mothers to begin with, but when they do, it is usually from 2 to 4 years. For the Central American children, on the other hand, the separation is protracted, lasting over 5 years in 49% of the cases.

Table 4. Length of Separation From Father Due to Migration (for those separated)

N = 223	CHINESE %	DOMINICAN %	CENTRAL AMERICAN %	HAITIAN %	MEXICAN %	Total Sample %
Up to 2 years	51	14	12	20	35	25
2-4 years	11	30	31	10	33	24
5+ years	37	57	57	71	33	51

When separation from the father occurs during migration, it is often a very lengthy or permanent one. For those families who were separated, 51% had separations from fathers that lasted over 5 years. This was the case for over half of the Dominican, and Central American families and in nearly three-quarters of the Haitian families.

Sequelea

As part of the psychosocial measures included in our study, our cross-cultural research team developed a psychological symptom scale, informed by the DSM-V (Association, 1994) and the SCL-90 questionnaire (Derogatis, 1977) that included questions deemed developmentally appropriate and cross-culturally relevant. This 26- item scale consisted of 5 subscales—depression, anxiety, cognitive functioning, inter-personal sensitivity and hostility.[5] We conducted one-way analyses of variance, using the different family separation and family constellation patterns as predictors, and the psychological symptom scales as outcomes.

We examined family constellations and found that children from intact families endorsed significantly fewer depressive symptoms than those in the other types of family arrangements. There were no differences in the other psychological subscales for the various family constellations.

We also conducted analyses of variance to determine if psychological symptoms differed across different family separation patterns. Children who were separated from their parents were more likely to report depressive symptoms than children who were not separated from their parents. Children who came to the U.S. with a parent leaving the other behind in country of origin, reported the highest levels of depressive symptoms. Again, however, there were no significant differences between the separated and non-separated groups for either the composite psychological symptom scale or for the other psychological symptom subscales.

Qualitative Data

It was clear in our many interviews and conversations arising out of the ethnographic process with immigrant youth, their parents, and teachers that these separations were experienced as painful and complex by many of those affected. Here we briefly present children, parents, and teachers perspectives on these experiences.

Children often spoke emotionally about separating from their loved ones. When the children are asked "What was the hardest thing about coming to the US?" in the first year interview, frequently the response reflected the painful nature of leaving behind a loved one. As one 14 year old Dominican girl said:

> — The day I left my mother I felt like my heart was staying behind. Because she was the only person I trusted – she was my life. I felt as if a light had extinguished. I still have not been able to get used to living without her. [6]

For most children, the departure is a time of mixed feelings. There is an excitement about the prospect of reuniting with loved ones and a new life. On the other hand, migrating entails leaving behind caretakers, who may have functioned as the real attachment figures for the child, for many years. Many spoke emotionally of the bittersweet nature of leaving. As an 11 year old Central American boy tells us:

> — Once I was in the plane they told me to be calm, not to be nervous, not to cry. I was crying because I was leaving my grandfather. I had conflicting feelings. On the one side I wanted to see my mother, but on the other I did not want to leave my grandfather.

While reunification is usually described with relief and joy, it is often interlaced with contradictory emotions. Feelings of disorientation are prevalently expressed. At times, the children report not recognizing the parent and poignantly describe feeling like they are meeting a stranger. As a 13-year-old Haitian girl shared:

> — I didn't know who I was going to live with or how my life was going to be. I knew of my father but I did not know him.

In several cases, the children express fear of the parent who they have not seen in many years. When the family has evolved in the child's absence to include new parental figures and siblings, the reunification process is further complicated. A 10-year-old Chinese girl recalls:

> — The first time I saw my father, I thought he was my uncle... I was really afraid when I saw my father's face. He looked very strict. I was unhappy. My father was a stranger to me. I didn't expect to live with a stepmother.

Hence, reunification is often an ambivalent experience. The theme of forging a new relationship with a stranger is prevalent. This complicates the future development of the relationship, with the sense of distance and unfamiliarity persisting for different lengths of time.

Parents, too, poignantly spoke of the sadness of separating from their children. In many cases this happened when the children were infants and toddlers. Leaving the children can be provoked by difficult economic conditions or dangerous circumstances in the country. The mother of a 13- year-old Central American boy shared:

> — I was a single mother and there we were at war. I talked it over with my mother and she told me that maybe [things would be better] on 'the other side.' It was very hard above all to leave the

children when they were so small. I would go into the bathroom of the gas station and milk my breasts that overflowed, crying for my babies. Every time I think of it, it makes me sad.

They maintain contact by phone, letters, and gifts though long-distance communication can be difficult, especially in long-term separations, as the children grow up and the parent becomes an abstraction. The mother of a 12-year old Central American boy explained:

— They lived with my mother in El Salvador (I left when they were babies). I spoke to the eldest once a month by phone. As the little one grew, I spoke to him, too. But since he didn't know me, our communication was quite short. I really had to pull the words out of him.

It is very important for the parent that the child understands the reasons they left so that they can appreciate the sacrifice. This, of course, is not always the case. As the father of a 13-year of Mexican boy confided:

— My son and my daughter are not warm toward me. They are still mad that I left them and was separated from them for years. Even when I explain to them that I came here for them, they don't hear, they don't understand. My daughter acted strangely when she first got here, she got jealous when I hugged my wife. She just wanted my attention for herself. Now, that's changed and things are getting back to normal.

When the caretaker in the country of origin supports the relationship in the absence of the parent, easier reunification is reported: The mother of a 13-year-old Mexican girl told us:

— In spite of everything, we have a good relationship because my mother always spoke well of me. She always told her where I was and that some day I would come for her. So there's a certain respect.

Other parents point to the difficulties faced upon reunification and the building of the new relationship. As can be expected, such experiences are mostly evident for families in which the children have been separated from parents at a very young age, and for lengthy periods of time. The mother of a 13-year-old Central American girl admitted:

— Our relationship has not been that good. We were apart for eleven years and communicated by letters. We are now having to deal with that separation. It's been difficult for her and for me. It's different for my son because I've been with him since he was born. If I scold him he understands where I'm coming from. He does not get angry or hurt because I discipline him but if I discipline [my daughter]

she takes a completely different attitude than he. I think this is a normal way to feel based on the circumstance.

Parents, like children, report that reunifications can be complicated for children that have to adapt to a new family constellation. Jealousy of new siblings or a new partner was frequently noted. These characteristics of the separation can lead to increased tension between the siblings and differential relationships of the parent toward the different children. The mother of a 13-year-old Central American boy disclosed:

> — We're getting used to each other. We are both beginning a different life together...[T]he kids are jealous of each other and my husband is jealous of them.

Parents also acknowledge the difficulties that children suffer when separated from other relatives that remain in the country of origin. The mother of a 9-year-old Mexican girl summed up the situation:

> — Before she came, she missed us. Now she misses her grandparents.

Teachers echo the parents and children's perspective. In interviews we conducted with teachers asking about their views of the challenges immigrant students face, several spontaneously offered observations about immigrant family separations. For example the director of an International center at a high school shared the following:

> —I feel like I need to give [students] a great deal of personal and emotional support in the transition they are making. Talk with them, use our advising group to constantly talk about the problems of adjustment, adaptation, how are you feeling, what issues are coming up...Almost universally they say things like "I'm happy this year because I'm with my mother for the first time in 5 years but I miss my grandmother who still lives in El Salvador." Or "I don't see my dad anymore." You know, the whole issue of family separations. There are a lot of emotional issues which come into this...So, many students come here because one parent has brought them and all of a sudden they are confronted with a parent they don't know very well. Maybe they have a whole other family they don't know...We have people here from China, from Brazil, from Haiti, from Central America and what is interesting is that they are all [talk about] the same issues. "I don't know how to live with my parent." (High School Administrator of an International Center)

Discussion

Here we present substantial evidence that separations between family members are normative in the migratory journey. The vast majority of the immigrant children in our sample, arriving from five countries of origin and recruited on two coasts, have been separated from one or both parents.[7] Given that twenty percent of children in the United States are growing up in immigrant homes, clearly a substantial number of children are being affected by this phenomenon.

Attachment and object relations theory would predict that such separations would be likely to lead to some degree of the psychological sequelea. Reports emerging from clinical contexts corroborate a concern that family separations arising from the migratory experience may lead to family friction and negative psychological outcomes (Arnold, 1991; Brosse, 1950; Burke, 1980; CDI, 1999). Our finding that children who arrived to the U.S. as a family unit involving no separations from their immediate family were less likely to report depressive symptoms than children whose families had separated during the migratory process further substantiate this prediction. Our qualitative data illustrates the poignancy of these separations from children's, parents', and teachers' points of view. These findings are in keeping with research on children separated from their caretakers under circumstances other than migration which suggest that even in cases in which children do not manifest measurable psychological symptoms, most report missing their parents and caretakers (Charnley, 2000; Totterman, 1989)

To understand immigrant children's responses to family separations, we must consider the complexity of the separation experience and the circumstances accompanying the separation. There is a wide range of variability in migratory patterns and circumstances. It is quite likely that the psychological sequelae will not be manifested similarly across country of origin groups or developmental levels (Minuchin et al., 1998). Symptoms may not necessarily be long term and will undoubtedly be affected by the social contexts both in country of origin as well as in the receiving site.

We postulate that a number of factors complicate the separation experience. Trauma arising from either a family tragedy such as the death of a loved one or from political, ethnic, religious prosecution, or warfare will dramatically alter the magnitude of the response. The sequelae may be more negative if the parent who goes away is the primary caretaker rather than the parent with whom the attachment is weaker. Associated losses may compound responses. Coming to terms with a parent leaving is more difficult if a child loses other critical supportive relationships concurrently. When predictable routines, so cherished by most children, are dramatically altered at the same time the parent leaves, the experience will be more disruptive (Boothby, 1992). It may not be the separation alone but accompanying "derailing events before, during, or after dislocation that lead to psychological distress of clinical proportions" (Perez-Foster, 2001).

The concurrent demise of the marital relationship may occur in tandem with the migration (Boti & Bautista, 1999; Simpao, 1999). The anticipation of the immigration may cause relationships to rupture prior to immigration and, in other cases, a break in the marital relationship may precipitate a parent journey abroad in search of a stable income (Simpao, 1999). At times, following protracted separations, once the family reunites the links in the marital dyad[8] may be so weakened that relationship comes apart in the new context; women may become significantly more independent, affairs may have occurred, or the more recently arrived partner may find the adjustment difficult (Boti & Bautista, 1999). Hence, it is a challenge to sort through what are the problems that arise out of the immigration-related separation and those that develop because of the marital-separation.

The quality of several relationships will play a significant role in the nature of adjustment including the child-parent(s) relationship bond prior to the migration (Arnold, 1991) as well as the rapport between the caretaker(s) and child. Of critical importance is the relationship between the care-taking triangle—caretaker, child, and parent (Minuchin et al., 1998). Problems may emerge if the parent feels threatened by the caretaker (Falicov, In press) or if the caretaker is disparaging of the parent. When the parent and caretakers are able to work effectively as co-parents, disruptions are likely to be much less than when there is an ambivalent (or

openly hostile) relationship. On the other hand, a cooperative caretaking triangle can enrich the child's experience.

A caretaker's ambivalent relationship with the parent who has left, may foreclose positive discussions about the missing parent (Shapiro, 1994). If the caretaker is concurrently grieving the absence of the missing parent, the child is likely to hold back in talking about the loss, making it difficult to make meaning of the situation. Further, if the caretaker is depressed by the separation with the parent, she will be less available psychologically to the child (Clarke-Stewart et al., 2000; Falicov, 1998; Hohn, 1996; Lyons-Ruth, Wolfe, & Lyubchik, 2000; Shapiro, 1994; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Weissbourd, 1996).

A variety of family characteristics may complicate or conversely act as a protective factor in the adjustment to this significant family transition. The remaining caretaker's ability to act as a holding environment that projects a sense of normalcy and high morale will be important (Boothby, 1992; Perez-Foster, 2001). Whether or not the family is able to maintain a sense of family coherence (Falicov, In press) will be critical. Are they able to expand the boundaries to include each point in the caretaking triangle? The ability to maintain authority as a parent is critical, and may be compromised if the parent feels guilty about leaving the child (Arnold, 1991; Burke, 1980; Falicov, In press). Maintaining communication during the parents' absence is also linked to better outcomes since inconsistent or minimal contact may be interpreted by the children as abandonment or not caring (Glasgow & Gouse-Shees, 1995). Phone calls, letters, tapes, photographs, and gifts play critical symbolic roles in keeping the flame of the relationship alive (Robertson & Robertson, 1971; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1997 to present). Problems at the time of reunification may cause difficulties in the adjustment process. Often new unions have emerged—children may encounter new step-parents and siblings, and these transitions may be quite complicated (Arnold, 1991).

Of critical importance to the adjustment process is how the child makes meaning of the situation of separation from parents and other loved ones. If the child is well prepared for the separation, and if the separation is framed as temporary and necessary, undertaken for the good of the family, the separation will be

much more manageable than if the child feels abandoned. Additionally, as our data suggests, separation followed by reunification, after an initial period of disorientation, may lead to an increased sense of closeness and intimacy in some families. Many of our participants viewed the relationship between parents and children as having increased in intensity because of the need to "make up for lost time."

Family therapists should be aware of the phenomenon of separation in their assessments and treatment of immigrant families as it creates a challenge to family relations and development. For many children, the process is painful, and leads to a sense of longing for missing parents. The "context and circumstances" of the separation will play a critical role in different outcomes (Wolkind & Rutter 1985). If the separation is cooperatively managed by parent and caretakers, and if the accompanying losses are minimized, the child, though changed, may not necessarily be damaged by the experience. Future research will be required to further unpack the short and long-term effects of the separation as well as ways to attenuate the effects of separation.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Carola Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco are the co-directors of this project conducted at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. This project has been made possible by funding provided by the National Science Foundation, the W.T. Grant Foundation, and the Spencer Foundation. The data presented, the statements made, and the views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors.

[2] Recruitment: Participating schools provided access to students, teachers, staff, and school records. We negotiated entrance into specific school sites with high densities of immigrant students. With the help of school authorities, youth who potentially met the inclusion criteria were identified—recently arrived immigrants whose parents were both from the country of origin. Research Assistants requested potential participants' involvement, assured them confidentiality and obtained parental informed consent. This is a sample of convenience. Random sampling would have been ideal, but it is not possible with a study that requires very specific inclusion criteria coupled with signed permission from school personnel and parents as well as a commitment to 5 years of participation. This limits to some degree our ability to generalize from our sample. In comparing the results of our descriptive statistics (parental education, parental employment, household size, etc.) to census and other available information on the U.S. immigrant population, we are confident that this sample is representative of recently arrived immigrants currently entering the public school system in large numbers.

Research Strategy: The research is guided by a multilevel conceptual framework which takes into consideration, on the one hand, the "incoming resources" that the children and families bring with them into the US, such as parental education, physical health, psychological health, prior schooling, and English language proficiency. At the same time, "host setting variables" are also taken into consideration, such as occupational opportunities, neighborhood safety, ethnic -relations, social support networks, peer relations, quality of schooling and the phenomenon of social mirroring (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). The study was designed to be sensitive to the commonalties in the experiences of immigrant youth, as well as to specifics of the paths of immigration and adaptation of the groups arriving from different points of origin. Immigration status (legal vs. undocumented vs. refugee), socioeconomic background, health and psychological resources, cultural traditions, racial background, social support networks and the socioeconomic and cultural climate that the immigrant children encounter are important factors that may affect their schooling.

Cross-cultural research with immigrant youth is inherently challenging. There is a growing consensus in the field that mixed method designs, linking emic (outsider) and etic (insider) perspectives, triangulating data, and embedding emerging findings into an ecological framework are essential to this kind of endeavor (Branch, 1999; Bronfenbrenner, 1988; Doucette-Gates, Brooks-Gunn, & Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Hughes, Seidman, & Edwards, 1993; Sue & Sue, 1987; Szapocnik & Krurtines, 1993). An important theme of the methodological debates surrounding the philosophical assumptions of qualitative and quantitative methods is whether they are compatible or based on such radically different epistemological grounds rendering them incommensurable (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These debates continue, yet there is a growing body of work that proposes different research designs and strategies that aim to achieve a complex understanding of the phenomena under study through using the strengths of both types of approaches (Ponterotto & Greiger, 1999; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Tolman & Szalacha, 1999).

The L.I.S.A. study utilizes research anthropology strategies to gain perspective on immigrant "cultural models" of schooling and immigrant social practices relevant to schools in the new setting. Youth are observed and interviewed in their schools, their communities, and their homes. Research psychology strategies are deployed to carefully establish a data baseline on immigration histories, social and family relations, and academic attitudes and behaviors. The longitudinal design allows us to caliber changes over time. This project employs five major data collection strategies: 1- ethnographic observations; 2-structured and semi-structured interviews of students, school personnel, and parents; 3- psychosocial measures; 4- standardized achievement assessments appropriate for English Language Learners; and 5- academic records. Our research assistants are bilingual and bicultural enabling us to gain entry into immigrant communities and establish rapport and trust with our participants. (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1997 to present).

Structured interviews were developed to systematically gather data on a variety of relevant topics including: migration and demographic history, schooling in the country of origin, initial impressions of U.S. society in general and U.S. schools in particular, aspirations, attitudes towards schooling, patterns of cognitive and behavioral academic engagement, kinship, family life, and networks of social relations. The structured student interviews employ a variety of question formats—some open ended, others are forced-choice, and still others are narrative. The interviews are translated into Spanish, Haitian Kreyol, Mandarin, and Cantonese. Participants can choose the language in which they wish to be interviewed. Interviews are piloted to establish age, cultural, and linguistic appropriateness. Interviews are taped, translated into English, and coded. Responses to these interviews are used to assess within individual changes over time as well as group differences.

In addition, twelve semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected youth who had undergone lengthy separations. The purpose of these interviews was do deepen our understanding of the child's experience and efforts to make meaning of the separation. Only youth who had been interviewed several times by the same interviewer participated. These interviews were entirely voluntary. The interviews afforded insight into the experience, influenced our conceptual framework, and are the source of several of the quotes provided in this paper. The detailed results of the analyses of these interviews will be reported elsewhere.

Data Analysis: The major function of the structured interviews is to collect the data for the quantitative analyses. A coding system was devised for the questions appearing on the student and parent structured interview. The initial coding system was devised using a priori categories. As we began to review that data, additional categories emerging from the data were added. For each year of data, the coding system is reworked until we are able to establish an overall inter-rater reliability within the substantial range. Descriptive statistics provide information pertaining to demographics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity), family information (e.g. parent educational and occupational status, immigrant status, socioeconomic status), neighborhood, and school information. Open-ended interview responses are converted to quantitative data by tabulating the incidence of each response category for each group under consideration. This prelimamary description will aid in better understanding of the sample under study as well as provide insights to possible predictors or indicators of interest. The analyses will also illuminate exisiting group differences and help determine potential control variables for future analyses. To examine the nature of group differences, statistical techniques employed would range from chi-square analyses to multivariate linear models such as analysis of variance or multivariate analyses of variance (repeated measures will be employed wherever appropriate).

The LISA project makes use of a variety of forms of qualitative data—school based ethnographies, open ended interview questions (of students, parents, and teachers), sentence completion tasks, in-depth interviews and case studies. These data are used for three primary purposes. First, because of the longitudinal design, these data allows us to identify emerging themes that are then systematically assessed in subsequent waves of data collection. Secondly, the data allow us to develop "thick descriptions" of the social worlds of immigrant youth. Thirdly, foregrounding these data allows us to discern culturally sensitive frameworks to examine causal patterns and conceptual relations for our findings. We used ATLAS/ti, a qualitative data analysis program, as a structured electronic environment to aid in tracking and analysis of responses.

[3] We defined "parents" as biological or adoptive parents, to which the child had formed an attachment bond.

[4] Note that for all tables presented in this paper, chi square analyses reached the significance level of $p < .01$. Also please note that the percentages may not always add up to exactly 100% as all numbers were rounded.

[5] The subscales of the Symptom checklist we used included: Lately, do you:

Depression: not have much energy, not feel like eating, cry easily, feel sad, feel not interested in much of anything, worry too much.

Interpersonal sensitivity: feel critical of others, feel shy, feel others do not understand you, feel people do not like you, feel like you are not as good as other people.

Cognitive Functioning: have trouble remembering things, have trouble making decisions, have trouble concentrating

Anxiety: feel nervous, feel something terrible is going to happen, feel like your heart is racing, feel tense, keep remembering something frightening.

Hostility: feel annoyed too easily, lose temper too easily, get into arguments too easily.

[6] Note that all quotes have been translated from respondent's native language.

[7] We do not claim that this sample is representative of the entire immigrant population in the United States, as it was not randomly generated all across the country. While we have data on immigrant youth coming from five sending centers, immigrant families coming from other countries may have lower (or higher) rates of separations. Further, as participants were recruited from public schools, it would not be inclusive of middle and upper status families who send their children to private or parochial schools. Therefore, it may be somewhat of an over-estimation of the prevalence of separations for all immigrants across socio-economic levels. We are confident, however, that it is representative of immigrant youth from these five sending regions attending public schools in the Boston and San Francisco areas. Although we cannot determine from this sample the exact proportion of immigrant youth affected, this study provides a strong indication of the magnitude of the phenomenon.

[8] We include common-law arrangements in this category.